

Regional SPATIAL STRATEGY EXTRACTS – RPG11 JUNE 2004

CHAPTER 4 – URBAN RENAISSANCE

Enhancing the Role of City, Town and District Centres

4.15 Revitalising city and town centres is an essential element of attracting people back into urban areas. This is not just because of the services they can provide but also because they play a key role in providing people with a sense of place. The Black Country and the North Staffordshire conurbation were formed by the merging of towns. People still strongly identify with their local town, although they may participate in activity across a wider area. This sense of identity and belonging needs to be nurtured and celebrated.

4.16 The study of the functional inter-relationships in the West Midlands has demonstrated a strong polycentric or multicentred pattern both within and outside the MUAs. While all centres have a function to serve their local communities, many centres have distinctive roles that serve a sub-regional, Regional or even national function. The retail function is only one element and centres may have other significant roles, for example, in tourism, financial services or leisure. There is great potential to expand existing roles and develop new roles, for instance in cultural regeneration.

4.17 Flagship schemes and cultural projects can be a catalyst for regeneration (PA10, QE5). Developments such as the National Indoor Arena and Brindley Place in Birmingham, Victoria Hall and the Regent Theatre in Stoke-on-Trent, the Phoenix Project in Coventry, the Walsall Art Gallery, and The Public arts facility in West Bromwich contribute to creating distinctive roles for different places, helping to raise their profile, enhancing the sense of place and being a source of local pride. There should be a close two-way relationship with the Regional Cultural Strategy in bringing forward schemes and programmes that have a spatial dimension.

POLICY UR3:

City, town and district centres and in particular those centres identified in the network of town and city centres in PA11, should be enhanced to play a leading role in urban renaissance programmes in order to provide services for local communities, a sense of identity and as drivers of economic growth. This will be achieved through:

- i) maintaining and enhancing the pattern of urban centres according to their function and role in the Region;***
- ii) developing strategies to maintain and enhance the underpinning role of all urban centres to serve their local communities in terms of retail provision, access to services and cultural/leisure activities;***
- iii) developing strategies to promote a sense of identity and local distinctiveness;***
- iv) identifying and creating opportunities for development, particularly for business, retail, leisure, tourism, cultural, educational and other services which are accessible to all;***
- v) adopting strategies to encourage more people to live in or close to centres through the reuse of sites, development of mixed-use schemes, the conversion of property and initiatives such as "living over the shop";***
- vi) ensuring the highest standards of design are adopted, building on the existing character and identity of centres; and***
- vii) enhancing urban centres as the primary nodes of the public transport network.***

CHAPTER 7 – PROSPERITY FOR ALL

Town and City Centres

7.54 Town and city centres are at the heart of communities throughout the Region and their future health and attractiveness will be a major determinant of the quality of life for everyone.

7.55 Policies PA11 to PA13 together with UR2 and UR3 address the key strategic issues affecting town and city centres and the location of development. The network of town and city centres in policy PA11 should be seen as a network within the polycentric concept of complementary centres rather than one of centres competing with each other.

POLICY PA11:

A. A network of strategic town and city centres will be developed across the Region as set out below:

Birmingham Kidderminster Shrewsbury Walsall, Burton-upon-Trent, Leamington Spa, Solihull, West Bromwich, Cannock, Lichfield, Stafford, Wolverhampton, Coventry, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Stratford-upon-Avon, Worcester, Dudley, Nuneaton, Sutton Coldfield, Hanley (Stoke-on-Trent), Redditch, Tamworth, Hereford, Rugby, Telford.

B. This network of 25 town and city centres will be the focus for:

i) major retail developments (i.e. those of more than 10,000m² gross floorspace, excluding floorspace dedicated to the retailing of convenience goods);

ii) uses which attract large numbers of people including major cultural, tourist, social and community venues (see also PA10 and UR3); and

iii) large scale leisure and office (Class B1a) developments (i.e. those of 5,000m² or more gross floorspace).

C. There are many other centres within the Region that meet local needs and development plans should identify and develop policies for such centres within their respective areas which best meet local needs.

Local authorities should be proactive in encouraging appropriate development to maintain and enhance their function as town centres (UR3, RR3).

7.62 The emphasis on larger centres should not preclude development plans identifying more local centres (UR3) where similar local strategies and town centre management approaches might be developed, particularly where this can support urban and rural regeneration.

CHAPTER 6 - COMMUNITIES FOR THE FUTURE

The Reuse of Land and Buildings for Housing

6.20 At least 76% of new housing in the Region should be on previously developed land (as defined in PPG3, Annex C). The estimated percentages for housing development in the 2001-2011 period are set out in Table 3. The RPB should undertake further work on appropriate targets for 2011-2021 to inform the review of this guidance. This work should take account of the functional housing sub-regions to be defined by the RPB together with the Regional Housing Board.

POLICY CF4:

A. Local planning authorities should optimise the opportunities for recycling land and buildings for new housing development through contributing to the achievement of a Regional target of at least 76% of future housing provision being on previously developed land between 2001-2011.

B. The RPB should, through its overall monitoring, assess the progress being made on achieving the above percentages, and, where necessary, should advise where development plan reviews should seek to

increase the scale of achievement in order to support the Spatial Strategy. In giving this advice, the RPB should take particular account of:

i) the opportunities for the reuse of redundant employment land and premises in urban areas;

ii) the opportunities for increasing the scale of housing provision in areas where high quality public

transport services are available in urban areas, such as city and town centres, or can be planned into new development; and

iii) the action taken by local authorities to reduce vacancy rates (e.g. by using Empty Homes Strategies) and the Government's target to reduce them.

CHAPTER 8 – QUALITY OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Urban Greenspace

8.15 Access to quality greenspace can contribute greatly to the Region's urban renaissance, improving the quality of life in

urban areas by providing opportunities for sport and recreation and supporting biodiversity. Maintaining, enhancing

and, where appropriate, increasing the amount of greenspace is, therefore, an important factor in considering the

most efficient use of land. In doing so, regard should be paid to English Nature's guideline of people in towns and cities

having accessible greenspace within 300 metres of their homes (Annex B). Urban forestry is promoted in policy QE8

and at a smaller scale, the opportunities for creating landscape frameworks reflecting local landscape character for

example, by using local native species, should be encouraged.

POLICY QE3:

A. Development Plans and other strategies should promote the creation of high quality built environments as part of urban and rural renaissance and the regeneration strategies for the Region's cities, towns and villages.

B. Particular attention should be given to:

i) securing a high quality of townscape, urban form, building design and urban spaces, through the use of architecture, urban design and landscape design, which respects Regional and local character, culture and history;

ii) promoting public art;

iii) incorporating sustainability considerations such as energy and water efficiency, use of renewable energy, sustainable construction and drainage, building orientation, use of recycled materials, minimisation of waste, construction materials, and prolonging the lifespan of buildings;

iv) assessing and minimising the impacts of noise and light pollution as a result of development;

v) creating safer environments which discourage crime; and

vi) promoting community safety.

C. Regard should be had to how land and buildings could be reused to achieve this objective.

8.16 In implementing this policy, consideration should be given to how under-investment in the management of existing urban parks, a number of which are now registered as historic parks and gardens, should be reversed. The longer-term management and maintenance of landscaping and public spaces generally, should be addressed at the outset when new developments are being implemented, for example by negotiating commuted sums.